1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-S (1955-1958) 1961
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within each sub-region, a gradation from west to east reflecting the successional outcropping of the various Globigerina beds. These outcrops give rise to minor breaks of slope so that the Central Region as a whole consists of a series of broad, stepped platforms. These become less distinct to the east where relief is diversified by deep wied incision. 24 * 31 *

XVIII (a). THE BIRKIRKARA REGION

A long tongue of urban settlement stretches westward from the main conurbation linking it to the previously independent villages of Birkirkara, Balzan, Lija and Attard. The built-up area occupies the shallow depression of the Birkirkara-Balzan valley and extends up the slopes on either side. Where this valley deepens eastward into the Wied Musida (130), settlement diverges on to the Santa Vennera Ridge. A few isolated farmsteads are dispersed throughout the region, but most of the land is worked by inhabitants of the several urban settlements. [361]

The northern slopes rise to the edge of Naxxar-Gharghur Hills, and the crops of this district have the same diversified balance of potatoes, cereals, fodders and minor legumes as was observed on the flanks of that region. Small, irregularly-shaped fields and scattered farmstead settlement further strengthen the similarity. On the edge of the built-up area, more intensive land use is associated with urban farming, particularly at Santa Vennera. At San Anton there is an enclave of irrigated gardens and orchards which is only in part directly associated with the Palace.

Musida Valley has a character of its own. In high-walled gardens on the floor of the upper wied some fruit cultivation is practised but the steep sides of this narrow defile have largely been abandoned. The silt-charged waters which frequently flow down the valley during periods of heavy rain bear witness to the soil erosion consequent upon such abandonment.

South of the built-up area lies the low upswelling of l-Imriehel (102) (Fig. 110). A narrow belt of buildings is slowly encroaching from the north on to land otherwise devoted almost entirely to cereals and sulla. The large, dry-farmed fields are on the whole poorly cultivated.

XVIII (b). THE TA'QALI REGION

This high and level Globigerina platform is largely occupied by an airfield which has destroyed the former unity of the region. Cereals and sulla occupy a particularly large proportion of the surviving farm land. Beneath the Mdina slopes, viticulture is of importance in the Wied il-Hemsija (113). On the other side of the airfield, towards Mosta and Attard, potatoes are the main secondary crop. Cultivation throughout is generally of a high standard. [508]

XVIII (c). THE ŻEBBUĠ REGION

Running east from the Rabat-Dingli uplands, this region is defined on the north by the Wied is-Sewda (104) and on the south by the Wied Qirda (202). In the west, where the wieds are shallow depressions rather than true valleys, there is no clear topographic break between the Żebbuġ Region and those to the north and south. To the east, however, though altitude decreases, the amplitude of relief becomes greater and a clearly defined spur stands between the deepening wieds.

On the high plains west of Żebbuġ (Fig. 117 C and D) is developed a particularly intensive type of dry farming. Cereals and sulla form the basis of rotations which include potatoes, vegetables and winter-fallowed land. Spring potatoes, mixed vegetables including summer brassicas, particularly cauliflowers, together with winter sulla and cereals are characteristic of this zone. The reasons for such an assemblage of crops are not altogether clear. The successional outcropping of Globigerina strata and intervening phosphatic nodule beds with consequent effects on soil development, the relatively high water table and distance from the sea would all seem to favour a highly productive form of dry farming but more investigation is required. Onion-growing is particularly characteristic of the environs of Żebbuġ, a lesser *pithoi* centre. Minor variations in crop assemblage are illustrated by Fig. 118.

1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) .1961
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On the spur of Ghar Ram (199) and tal-Handaq (200), the intensity of cultivation decreases eastward, cereals and sulla becoming dominant. The even slopes of tal-Hlas (198) drop northward to the more level Ghammieri district of the Wied is-Sewda. Gradient has little effect on the selection of crops grown in these areas. Cereals and sulla dominant throughout although potatoes assume a greater importance than on the summit. In contrast the southern edge of the ridge is more abrupt, falling sharply to the Wied Qirda. Precipitous terraces, standing above a storm-water channel cut in Lower Coralline rocks are almost completely abandoned. The only pocket of fruit cultivation in this region lies in the Wied Qirda above the main incision and close to Żebbuġ.

Scattered settlement of farmsteads and a few small hamlets is generally aligned along roads and tracks. The great majority of the land-holders, however, live in the casal of Żebbuġ which combines some urban functions with those of village settlement.

XVIII (d). THE SIĠĠIEWI REGION

In many ways this region is a counterpart of that of Żebbuġ. The high plains west of Siġġiewi sweep south from ta'Brija (133) to tal-Bajjada to merge with the open Rdum tal-Lunzjata. Intensive dry-farming of cereals, sulla and vegetables is characteristic. Onion cultivation is of particular importance here as throughout the region.

From this western platform, the ridges of tal-Bordin (135), tal-Ghaqba (205) and ta'Haxxluq carry relatively high land to the east. Tal-Bordin is noteworthy only for the absence of early potatoes, possibly because of its rather exposed position. The place-name element *nadur*, meaning a look-out point, is significantly attached to the fields on this small ridge. The main ridge of tal-Ghaqba, carrying a variety of crops, is generally similar to tal-Handaq on the other side of Wied Qirda. The crop range is similar on ta'Haxxluq ridge, though the fields are generally smaller and the country more broken (see Fig. 119). In these eastern districts, the commercial farming element is most strongly represented by onion growing which is even more extensive here than around Żebbuġ.

Siġġiewi itself was established on the south-western edge of the central settlement zone of Malta. The casal and outlying farmsteads were to some extent influenced by the need for protection from corsair raids. Walled enclosures and a few defensive towers indicate past insecurity. Siġġiewi still lies off the busiest lines of communication and the south-western part of the region is one of the least accessible districts of the central lands of Malta. Here, small hamlets cluster around isolated churches as at tal-Providenza (150).

XVIII (e). THE QORMI REGION

The district around Qormi is atypical of the Central Region as a whole. A considerable number of motor-driven pumps extract water from the fault-fissured Globigerina beds and irrigable land constitutes a large proportion of the total area. Vegetable and fruit crops, the latter including citrus and even such exotics as the banana are grown intensively in this sheltered district (Fig. 120). The Qormi basin is a westward continuation of the Marsa lowland, an area of alluvial deposition (see Chapter II). Large farms with irrigated gardens surround the large casal (Fig. 117B).

C,XIX. THE SOUTHERN REGION

A highland ridge with an average altitude of more than 400 feet extends eastwards from the Upper Coralline scarp at Lunzjata along the southern coast as far as Bubaqra. Further east and towards the interior of the island, the land falls away in gentle slopes. Although true wasteland is confined to a coastal belt coinciding with outcrops of Lower and down-faulted Upper Coralline beds, much land has elsewhere been taken out of cultivation. The airfields of Luqa and Hal Far, still in use and their as yet un-reclaimed wartime extensions, together with large-scale quarrying on either side of Mqabba, have sterilised a great deal of land.